



Interview With **Debashish Mishra** Sound Designer

You have worked with variety of directors. How do you prepare the sound design for any film ?

The actual designing starts much later. When one reads the script for the first time, one tries to understand the soul of the film whether it is a thriller or a comedy. I take the briefings from the director, I keep listening to how he is reacting to a scene, how he explains it to an actor. I don't like to judge a film while reading the script whether the script connects to me or not. I really don't think that much about it. I pay more attention to what the director is thinking about and try to translate that best to my ability. Some films need organic sounds, what one actually hears in a day to day life. I mean too many dramatic sounds are not needed. There are certain scripts of films like "Ek tha Tiger" or "Dhoom-3" where one tries to keep the sound scape bit over the top.

When you are doing a film in which a pilot going to be used, what are your expectations from other department like art direction, camera or costume ?

If it is for outdoor locations we request DOP not to use butter papers and certain kinds of lights which make lot of noise. Since a lot of radio microphones will be used, we request costume designer to try not to use fabrics which will rustle or may make so much of noise

that the rustle sound will be more louder than the dialogue. Suppose an art director is putting up a set of a house having wooden floor, then we request that fake wood is not used. It might look like wood but it doesn't sound like the wood when somebody walks on it. These types of interactions happen with various departments but one sees a lot of surprises also when we finally land up on the set.

Can you point out one or two of such surprises?

During the making of the film "Sarkar Raj", I was shocked on the very first day. The moment Mr. Amitabh Bachchan starts to walk from distance, I could hear the 'Chur' 'Chur' sound which was so loud. When I saw his feet he was wearing those "Kolhapuri" chappals. They were brand new and the leather was making that unwanted sound. I allow the first shot to be taken. During the shot Mr. Bachchan is walking and saying his dialogue but I couldn't hear anything. After the shot, I went up to Mr. Bachchan and requested him to remove the shoes due to the noise they were making. He also realized the problem but expressed his inability to remove them as he had asked the costume designer to get them. According to him, hearing that sound makes him feel like a Sarkar otherwise he feels like a servant. Finally, he understood the

requirement and was ready to remove the shoes. In certain scenes, it will show. In this manner, a couple of days passed without much disturbance. Fortunately, his shoes got wet in a rain sequence and they stop making noise. Sometime nature helps you !!

He later told me jokingly that it was a conspiracy by the sound department because he didn't have a spare pair of shoes. Sometimes one goes to reece and feel it is quiet and shoot can happen. However, on the day of the shooting, one encounters some construction work happening nearby with noises which one never expected !

When things like that happen how do you resolve them ?

Most of the times people need to be convinced as best as possible and that is the only way.

How much cleaning is required in post production when you know that this film will have only pilot?

its been a while the sync sound is happening in digital format. The post production technology is evolving very fast according to the demand. For example in pro tools one can find really good plug ins which will do the noise cleaning without affecting the texture of the dialouge. Having said that I don't believe in too much clean up. In the dialogue if there is a very minimalistic ambience sound and the boom sound is clean then one doesn't need to clean up. I mostly use both boom and lapel tracks, balance them out nicely and get a very clean correct sound. If it is a very noisy location obviously one has to clean it up. In a day ambience sound level keeps changing. In one shot the dialogue level is fine but the ambience level changes. How do you balance that for the overall scene ? One keeps taking room tones a couple of times in day and after edit one see which is the maximum part of the day the dialogue is being used. May be one has taken wide masters in the morning but closeups happen in the afternoon or late afternoon. They mostly keep the dialogues in the close ups or in the mid shoots. We try to keep that room tone and one knows all the wide shots. One tries to get the close up sound and put it on the wide and try to create the perspective. The room tones are pretty much the same but different time of the day the ambience changes. Early mornings are little quieter and as the time



passes we hear distant traffic or some other activity sounds. In order to be on the safer side that one keeps a morning room tone, it is advised to keep an afternoon room tone and a late afternoon tone to basically smoothen the dialogue. Whatever the ambiances are there, the room tone really helps.

You have done few films with Ram Gopal Verma. What does he bring in as a director which helps you as a sound designer?

I think he is a genius filmmaker. He is extremely impatient while shooting, so his shoots are a bit chaotic to do sync sound. One is always on one's toes. One has to be really fast and whatever one wants it has to be achieved in a minimalistic time. Secondly he is the guy who will not believe in room tones or wild dubs such things. He says that "okay" it can be managed by you. I am not going to keep the set stand by for you to take room tones. He is one director who will appreciate your out of the box thinking. He loves surprises. His ears are very sharp and he will notice even a very low level sound like a bird chirping somewhere. For him whatever sounds we put, it has to have some meaning. Sometimes you put ambiances thinking that it is general ambience it will go but some particular sound which is standing out he will definitely point it out that is bothering him. Hence, one has to change it.

Could you elaborate his experimenting nature a bit more in the context of sound design?

When I was doing film 'Contract' with him, there is a long action sequence in the climax. It was shot very stylized, all high speed but it had a rhythm. The hero comes in and kills one person and then another bit comes. There is a particular rhythm to that action. I laid all the sound effects for whatever was visible there in the scene like one guy who falls through the glass, lot of crashing and gun shots

happening etc. Later I found it is very cluttered with heavy background music. It was like too much is happening and there is no clarity between things. There are three cuts, the hero shoots the guy, the guy crashes on to something and then he falls down and another guy crashes on shower and he falls down. This rhythm was there. I just kept the gun shot, the crash and then falling totally silent. When Ram Gopal Verma first saw it he thought that it was a mistake. When he inquired why there is no sound then I playback the scene again. Now he loved it. He really freaked out on that and said that this pattern is fantastic and he changed the background according to it. He really went back in the night to music studio to change the entire style according to the sound design. Hence, this is his attitude. If you give him something unconventional he gets excited. He would have okayed the earlier track also as all the sounds were there but this is something which excited him. You feel good as a sound designer because When you get that kind of feedback you also try to think and add more value.

How different is it to work for the television than from a film. Do you really get enough opportunity to showcase your talent ?

Both are equally challenging. In fact, I find television much more challenging because in television we don't have option of recording in a 8 track recorder. One doesn't have the kind of budget where one knows one asks the production. I want to put sound mats over here and I want to cover those area with sound blankets and lock down the area with a lock up team. In the television, we are mixing everything to one track on location. There are five characters who are talking to each other that one is balancing their levels who is loud, who is soft, all those things need to be balanced properly. When the director says action ! One is there totally 100 percent because

any simple mistake can ruin the take. In films everything is going separately, booms are going separately, each character's lapel mics are going separately. Hence, there is a little bit of here and there. One should also have safety option. While recording on location in films where pilot will be used, one has to be much careful because one is going to playback the whole film in a 5.1 theatre system. Hence, whatever noises which one is getting on top of the dialogue like even an actor's footstep can actually disturb a dialogue. Suppose one particular character is delivering the dialogue in a soft level and the other person's footsteps are caught by it. If I try to increase the dialogue level the footsteps are automatically going to go up. Finally it is not going to sound nice. One tries to muffle sound by putting sound mat and other things. One has to be very careful even while talking such as a character keeping his glass on the table. Such a sound should not be picked up. The main focus should be on how to get a clean dialogue. If one achieves that then 90 percent of your job is done.

Do you remember any episode from "Teri Meri Kahani" from Kunal Kohli's film which you would like to mention from that film.

I remember one incident. As you know that the film happens in three phases in 1920s, 1960s and the current set up. The mid story which was set up is the 1960-70 Mumbai. One obviously won't have that much traffic ambiances existing in that scenario. It should not be too noisy to recreate that 1960s ambience. They chooses one location which was like really looking great from the visual point of view but from the audio angle it was really bad as it was right next to the main S.V. Road. I clearly told them that sync sound is not going to happen. If you have to dub the entire sequence we can shoot there. It was a

huge chunk. Luckily that time monsoon was also there and good sense prevailed. It was decided to go ahead with the set.

Dhoom 3 was a very big budget and an ambitious project with bikes and action sequences. Do you remember anything specific which you would like to mention of Dhoom 3 ?

The main thing was the double role. It was a huge challenge for us to do the sync sound in that area because the motion control rigs in India, one normally uses for such scenes were really noisy. Once the camera starts moving you will keep hearing loud noise from the mortar of the rig and was almost impossible to do sync sound. Luckily the production team did a lot of research for the sound and they found a Rig in LA, the motion control rig which almost cuts down the noise by 90 percent. It has still noise but whatever scenes you have seen in Dhoom 3 not a single line is dubbed. Fortunately, they got that rig from LA to here with all those custom problems. It was a big challenge which was sorted out. The best experience was working with Amir Khan. He is one actor who gives 100 percent, will go out of his way to help you get his dialogues correct.

In that film there were many sequences in which water boat is flying, a variety of sounds for the bikes. Could you talk about that ?

Before the film, I thought that for the bike sound we will put a mic and record it. But we didn't realize that these are 1300 cc bikes. They were really fast. I needed a real bike screech, passes sounds & other material. Once it starts, it just goes Zuupu ! One doesn't want that sound. I wanted a long duration of bike engine going in that speed, 5 seconds of that bike in 200 miles per hour. Now the question is how to record that sound ? One cannot move parallel with that in air ! If one takes another vehicle then that vehicle will add its own sound. One cannot sit on the bike too and record. It was risky and tough. Hence, the only way was to mount a mike. It is through mounted and hidden mikes on the bike, I recorded a lot of tracks. Separately, I also recorded numerous bike sounds. We got all those bikes in India too.

What about those kind of sounds which are at a distance ? For example an helicopter shot below the bike. One needs to have that perspective also.

We recorded both bikes and the helicopter separately. We mixed it down later to get the perspective in most of the actions that are recorded on location. Mounting, hiding the mics near streets wherever the bike was jumping, I kept the zoom recorders down there. A lot of sounds were collected while shooting. Later, we also recorded bike sounds here in India at other quieter locations. Inside Yash Raj Studio, we mounted the bike and did all the accelerating etc and sounds were recorded .

Tell us about your first film's experience as a location sync sound.

My first sync sound film was 'The last monk' directed by first time filmmaker Sudipto Sen. I really enjoyed doing that film because we experimented a lot in terms of sound. Even most of the music one hears in this film was recorded on location. The location was beautiful because it was Ladakh. Ladakh has its own texture of ambience due to silence. When one hears those wind sounds, one gets it's natural echo.

When one is shooting in certain locations and if the actor is shouting in a dialogue we could actually hear the delay. He wanted to show every sound of Ladakh in that film. I went to some 20 monasteries over there. I traveled on my own. I took my recorder, engaged one of my assistants as boom operator. We recorded a lot of monastery sounds, monastery music and a lot of chanting etc. Those tracks we used as background music in the film in most of the places.

We even recorded the voice overs to capture that location's reverb, delays and the echoes. We took the actor at two different locations where one could feel the texture of voice is really changing. We took days off from the shoot and travelled with the actor and just recorded voiceovers. It was a holistic experience for me in terms of sound.

The main advantage you have with a first time filmmaker is the interaction. They interact a lot. They tell you, accept you to do certain things. They ask you to read the script and give your feedback. In this manner the involvement is much more. First time filmmakers are more experimental. They try to do things a little bit differently.

Folly recording and using them to the maximum impact is an important part of any film for a sound designer.

Could you talk about the folly section of the sound design part ?

I feel folly recording and using appropriately in any section is a very creative process. The ways in which the folly artists recreate those sounds are really amazing. Actually, one has to see it to believe it. One might think that a lot of sound effects have been taken from the sound stock library but they have been actually recreated by the folly artists. Folly gives a presence of the actor. For example if one is sitting here any of the movements, the close rustling are created. Without them one would feel dry.

The presence is primarily because of the dialogue but how does the folly help to create the presence?

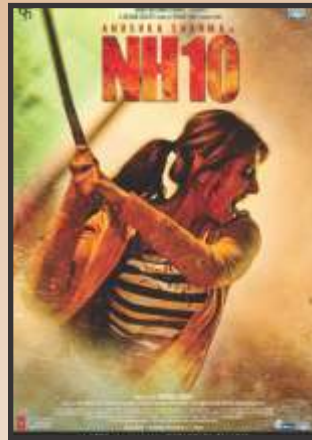
Folly concerns the movement sounds, close rustling, feet movement, footsteps, all these sounds. For example if one is sitting on a leather chair or sitting on a wooden chair. All those sounds really create the presence. One may not hear it but one feels it. If they are muted then one finds that something is missing, something is not right. Hence, it is a very invisible sound but it really adds a lot to it.

Since all these sounds have existed for ages, don't you think that the stock sound would be equally good to use rather than to record the folly ?

Every film is different and demands a different kind of treatment. The actors ,kind of things they are wearing are different. The shoes they are wearing are different, the kind of rooms one is using are different. It will be a compromise if we take it from the stock and try to match these things. In terms of production it will be a huge time consuming process. One might as well record it.

Coming to the mixing of the sound, sometimes one mixes to the taste. The director says it is too loud or subtle. How do you go about it in those situations which don't match with your taste ?

Well, its the director who takes the final call, Sometimes you have designed a particular sequence in terms of sound effects, you think this will work best with the real sounds with minimal back ground score but the director may not agree. In that case I will treat it musically so that creative call depends upon the director. You can only make him listen what you want. □□□



Subash Sahoo

Interview with Sound Designer



WORKING WITH PIYUSH JHA (KING OF BOLLYWOOD)

When I started my career, at that time dubbing was done but Sync sound was not being used. While shooting of a film, King of Bollywood, directed by Piyush Jha in London, we were facing many problems doing Sync sound. Earlier for dubbing, people used cameras like Arri-2C or Arri-3, and steady cam but Sync sound could be possible only by usage of blimp cameras. So to get the Sync sound we decided to use Arri-BL3 camera which would not add any noise. It is a very heavy camera in comparison to Arri-2c, Arri-3. The steady cam started making noise as it had to bear an additional weight of 10-15 kg. There was a quandary situation as most of the scenes were of Sync sound of around 2 mins 3 mins, and because of heavy weight of camera, mount could not bear it, ultimately it started giving a squeak during panning with a noise which was a typical because that particular frequency was merging with the dialogue frequency of the actor. As we all know that any sound is basically a

bandwidth of the frequency and another unwanted sound (If that happens to be the frequency of same bandwidth needs to be removed). It affects the voice quality of the actor. I quickly realized the urgency of the situation that squeak was almost close to the frequency of the voice & and requested Piyush Jha, that we need to rectify this issue.

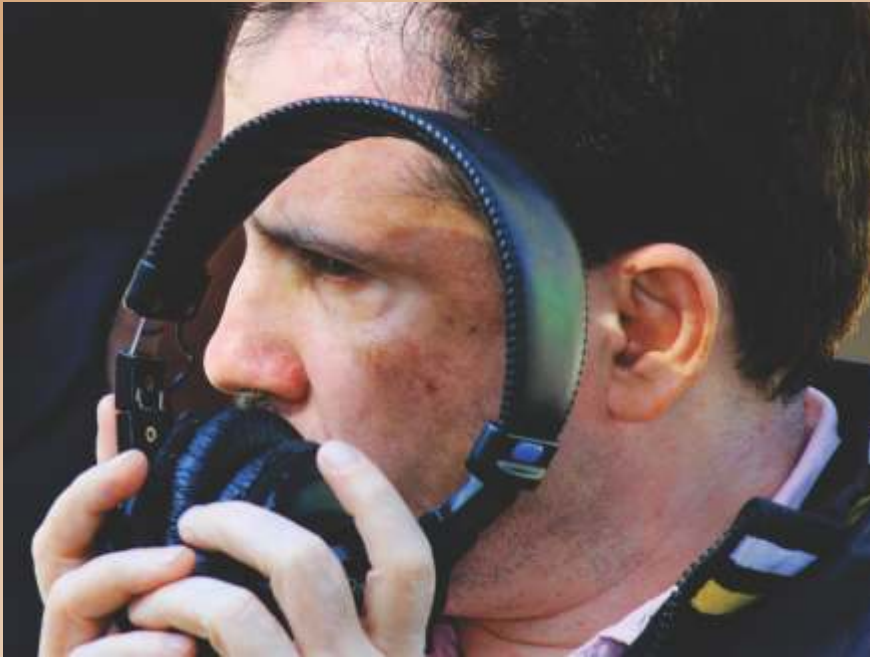
Hari Nair, a senior graduate from FTII, Cinematographer of the film was very co-operative. He was consulted for the problem aroused. He gave quick solution to the problem by asking steady cam operator to check the ball and grease all the parts again so that noise could be minimized. After doing all this we managed to minimize this noise up to 80%.

After that day we made sure that the camera and its parts were greased daily in the evening so that it can work smoothly without making such noises, after that without any hassles we were successful in recording the clean sound. So, finally we ended the film in a very good note. It is very necessary for a professional to understand the entire department because it is not only one person's film as everyone has contributed to it. We all are there to take directors vision further.

WORKING WITH NAVDEEP SINGH (MANORMA SIX FEET UNDER)

While working with Arvind Kannabiran; DOP, we were shooting in Mandva in Rajasthan, I could not go for the first Recce, & Arvind went. He





saw whole location and observed something very important for sound as many cinematographers would not have noticed as they are primarily concerned with things which are relevant from camera point of view .

He had an ear for the sound too. When he came back to Bombay and had a meeting of all HOD, he told me that it is a problematic area where this bungalow is located which was like a small government quarter and we are supposed to shoot over there almost like a 8-10 days which was a huge chunk of the film .Almost like a hundred meter from the shooting bungalow there was a power station where major part of Rajasthan gets power supply and in an around say half Acre there are around 30-40 transformers.

When I visited for recce later, I saw that the power supply wires and the transformer created so much of noise because of isolation & because the emptiness the sound could be heard plainly. He told the production guy would cover the courtyard of that bungalow so that it could become sound proof or at least outside sound could be minimized. He knew it very well that it will add up to his problem of lighting, but voluntarily he had asked production dept. to do it for me.

I am talking about another DOP Hemant, who was supposed to work

with Navdeep Singh's next film. In order to avoid any disturbances he told me that though he has checked track trolleys and lights should be noiseless and he even requested me to recheck so that it doesn't create any problem due to his equipments. It is rare to find such DOP who foresees the issue where camera department may cause for sound designer.

WORKING WITH VISHAL BHARDWAJ(OMKARA)

While shooting Omkara with Tassaduq Hussain DOP, it is to be remarked that he is very friendly and a gem of a kind to work with. At any point of time if he sees a problem encountered due to camera department to sound designer, he stops shooting and sorts out the issues even if it is fluttering sound causing due to butter paper on the light in windy weather.

I remember a sequence, when we were doing recce for the Omkara which was not finally shot.

Vishal Bhardwaj wanted on the top of the tree there were supposed to be a machan, where Ajay and Kareena supposed to sleep and a jimmy-jim would go around and take the shot. But for sound engineer it was not practically feasible to go over there and give him a lapel.

The boom was the only option also if there was a machan on the branch of the trees, how the boom be held. while we were doing recce , I spoke to Vishal Bharadwaj and we decided If we are making machan we also have to make one more machan so that I can put the boom guy on the tree ,where he can comfortably hold the boom from the top. When we disused this idea with DOP, Tassaduq ,to shoot the whole scene in 3- angles and not to use fourth angle, he





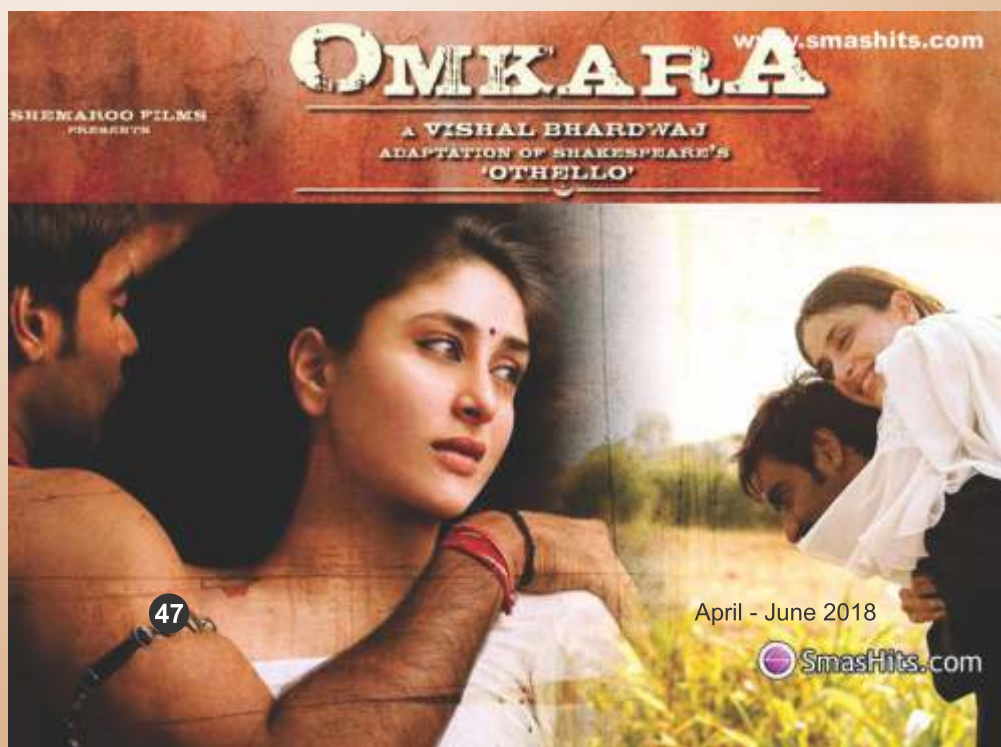
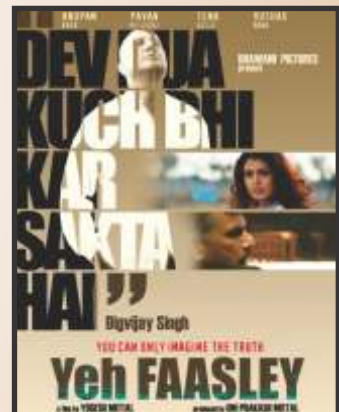
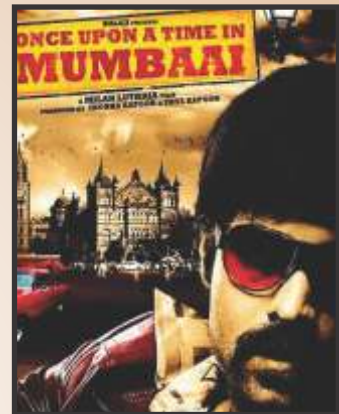
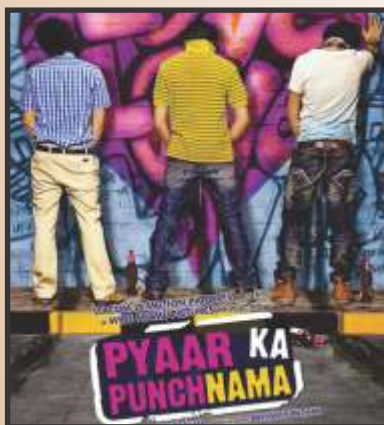
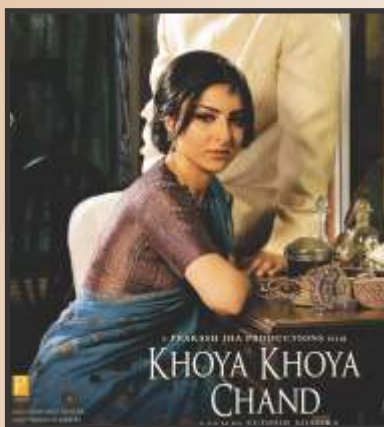
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understood the requirement and immediately agreed, to leave the 4th angle for boom guy. So this kind of collaboration we always expect from a sensible DOP to give space to another technician who is also there for the betterment of the film and not for personal gain.

WORKING WITH SHYAM BENEGAL:

Another example of my earlier days, while working with Shyam Benegal . I was working with another DOP who was collegee in FTII. We were shooting in a small room of 8x8 feet. I saw some 4-5 HMI with booster, creating awkward noise almost like a generator. I requested him could you please take them out or light up in such a way so that one HMI can be inside and four outside. The DOP straightaway refused and despite being a colleague from FTII didn't listen to me. Then i had no option but to call the director Shyam Benegal and request him to sort out the issue. He heard the sound on the headphone and said my goodness all the five HMI are sounding like a generator. He took off the headphone and asked the DOP to light up whatever way he wanted to light, but take the HMI lights outside. All the HMI's were off, and multi-twenty with blue filters came in. The whole day he lit up through "multi twenty", which he could have done much before the director gave him the instructions.

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Baylon Fonseca

Interview with sound designer

When you work on any project as a location sound Recordist, what are the things you discuss with the DOP so that there could be a smooth flow of work?

Film is and always will be an audio-visual medium. When the audience watch a film they pay attention to the performances on screen and what captures their attention is the beauty and vibrancy of the visuals which bring out the drama and emotion. This stimulates or creates the feeling of happiness, sadness, romance and some many more such varied feelings. It is these moods in the visual that inspires me. When the visual has these moods and movements beautifully captured, it becomes an extension of my own feelings that helps me to ideate and create sounds that includes even simple ambience. I believe sound should elevate these feelings and transport the audience right in the middle of what's happening on screen. When tactfully done you end up with a beautiful film in which your audience walk away experiencing something so rich and wonderful.

Coming back to your question, the general opinion is that the Sound

Recordist and DOP never get along on the set.

In my earlier years, when I got an opportunity to work with the senior DOP, I was petrified, how to break the ice between us.

And then, I worked with Hemant Chaturvedi on a short film called 'Positive' directed by Farhan Akhtar. It was one of the sweetest and most memorable experiences I ever had with a DOP. It was at that point in time that I realised this overhyped cold war between a DOP and Recordist were baseless.

It is important for a Recordist to understand the scene being shot vis-a-vis the location of the scene and its blocking with the actors. Once a shot is setup you are paying attention to the frame edge, first mark / last mark of the camera and boom shadows. I feel the AC, the gaffer and the key grip also need to be within your radar since they are the people who help you to sort a lot of the potential problems on set.

When director wants the location sound to be perfect and the sound would not get dubbed later, therefore sound

becomes equally vital as visual. In such crucial situation team work is required and expectation of cooperation with DOP is raised.

We encountered the same situation when we approached Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara. Having worked with Zoya Akhtar earlier I knew her anticipation of the sound track for the film. During preparation, we spent some time discussing the film and the overall plan for the sound of the film both on shoot and in post. This was also my second film with Carlos Catalan and I must say working with him is fun and stress free. He being so acutely tuned into sound and the difficulties we encountered on ZNMD made my life a great deal simpler.

One of the most challenging scenes to shoot was the car scenes in the film. Car scenes are simple when you have them on a low loader. However a car mounted with a camera that is being driven in free run is tougher to manipulate when we have a few pages of dialogue scripted. Trickier still is when you have two such picture vehicles and your short alternate between one that is rigged and the other that is attached to

the low loader. Proper planning and co-ordination with precision always ensured we were never a step behind the production process for the day. All this thanks to super co-ordination by Carlos and his team, of course not leaving out the direction team.

So what we did was very basic, we ensured that we were well prepared, when we knew it would be a tough day to shoot

The scene and shots were discussed to the best of what we knew would happen in the scene minus the actual blocking of the scene.

Apart from the car scenes we had tricky scenes surrounding the sky diving, at the beach, the boys arrival at Pampalona for the bull run, their actual bull run which makes up the climax of the film, the innumerable bar scenes and

my favourite scene where Imraan (Farhan Akhtar) and Arjun (Hrithik Roshan) fight after the cell phone is thrown out of the car. Two scenes that threw up special challenges were the birthday party and the engagement scene, just because of the sheer number of actors in the scene. Some of these scenes were shot as two camera setups and this can drive any Recordist crazy if the lens choose are extremes.

I find that in a good number of films being shot nowadays a DOP is choosing to shot with 2 cameras. Especially if it's a long scene that needs to be completed in a specific time frame, 2 camera setups can wreck havoc on set for a Recordist if the lens chosen is wide apart. I normally always discuss lens in such situations with a DOP and ask the class 101 questions even if it may sound stupid to the ear. Imagine a shot setup for 2

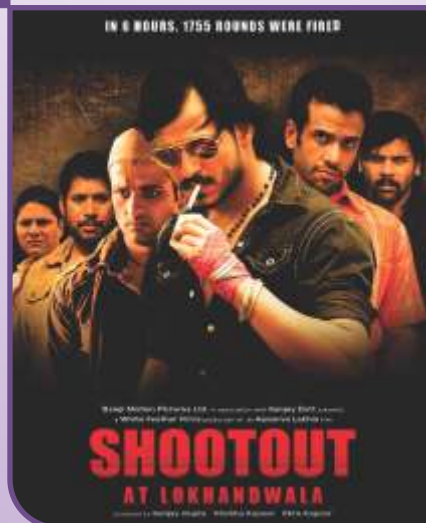
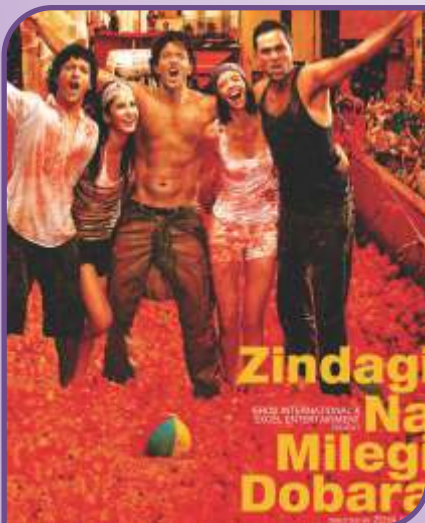
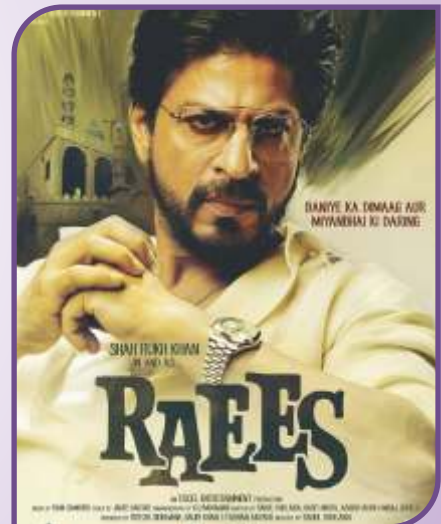
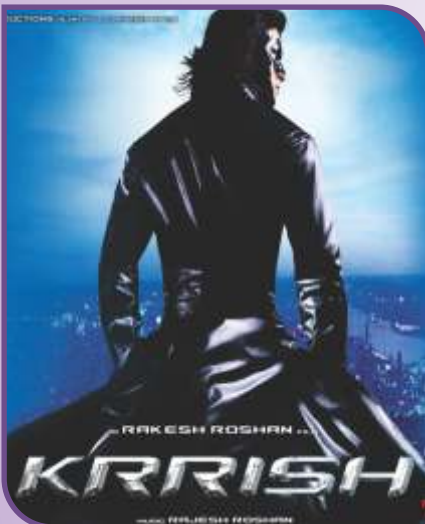
cameras with one having an 18 mm and another having a 75mm . I recently got told by a DOP that he actually had shot some scenes in a film within similar lens. Thankfully he added to it that it was a pilot track being used in the film.

Do you remember a specific instance where you had no way out because of the complexity created on the set by DOP ?

I don't think film making offers you a situation wherein a problem you encounter cannot be solved. Yes one faces tons of difficult situations but I figure every such situation has a way out.

There are so many stories, like one time I landed up on the set a day before the shoot figuring where we were shooting; it was in a hotel room in a very quiet location. Life seemed so sorted until I figured everyone on the crew

Important Films of Baylon Fonseca as Sound Recordist





forgot to tell me that it was going to be 5 cameras rigged in different spots in the room all hidden from view. So much for Canon 5D's. The time we land up in this National Reserve in Spain that is so outstandingly beautiful but out there in the middle of nowhere with gale winds hitting us through the entire duration of

the shoot. At the time we were shooting in Ahmedabad with crowds of locals who had no clue what it meant when everyone was screaming 'silence on set'. The wonderful footnote to all of these situations is that we got some beautiful sounding dialogue recorded that made it to the final print and now remains etched in the history forever.

So yes you are constantly going to be facing problems in the simplest of situations. It all comes down to how prepared you are to move from plan A to plan B to plan C if the need should arise.

Having said, there is one very unique problem I have faced and it still continues to haunt me. When we were shooting on these beautiful designed set years ago, we were rolling regularly two artist scene and started with the wide shot to establish the scene and its location. As we went tighter in the next shot

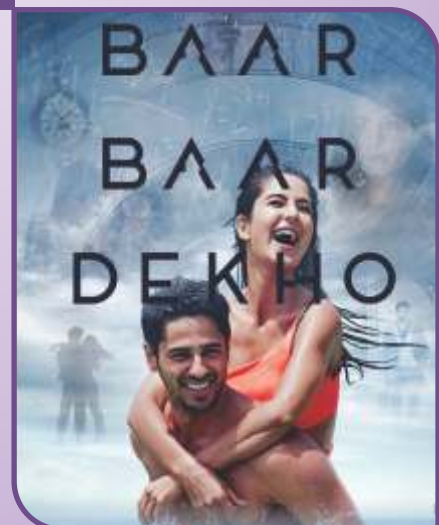
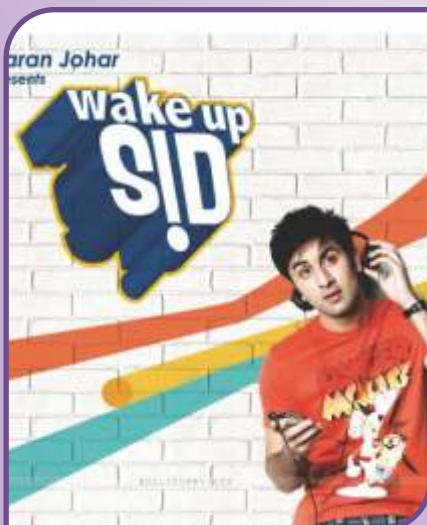
I was continuously being told that the boom shadow was falling onto the actor's forehead. This happens a couple of times and it leaves me flummoxed. I figured that in order to avoid the boom shadow, my boom position had to be higher than where it was in the wide shot.

So you are saying that in the close up, you could not bring the boom down.

Yes I could not bring the boom down closer to the actors because I was ending up with a shadow on the forehead. Till date, I could not figure why the lighting was not adjusted to suit the shot. I was given an explanation that went "We have a lot of pages to shoot everyday so I cannot keep adjusting the lights for every shot". And that was the end of it. By the end of the shoot I was having nightmares featuring 'boom shadows'.

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Important Films of Baylon Fonseca as Sound Recordist



Interview with

Bishwadeep Chatterjee

On *Bajirao Mastani*



**How did you prepare the sound design for the film *Madras Café* ?
Realizing that is a different kind of film which you have been doing so far.**

To start with this was a very interesting and unusual subject for Bollywood. Shoojit Sircar has been living this subject for quite a few years before the conditions were conducive enough for him to actually start making the film. There is a considerable amount of research that has gone into making the film and apparently John agreed to do the film. So when Shoojit actually sat down and explained the whole idea about that the journey of an Indian intelligence officer with the backdrop of the LTTE, the Sri Lankan problem and the assassination of the ex prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, a vital part of our History (which my generation lived through) came alive.

The film was shot in N. Delhi and Kerala. Being a very sensitive subject, shooting in Sri Lanka was out of the question, so they decided to shoot in Kerala, as the terra firma is very similar

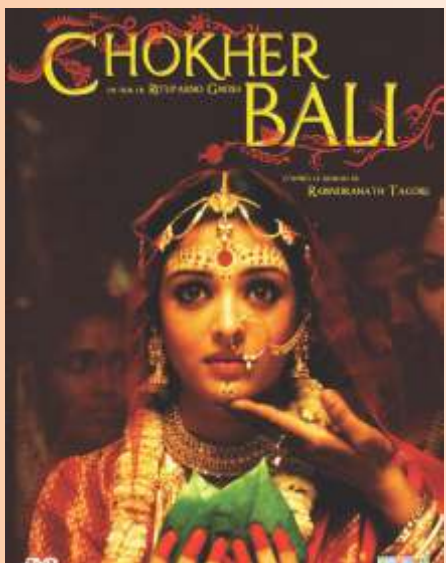
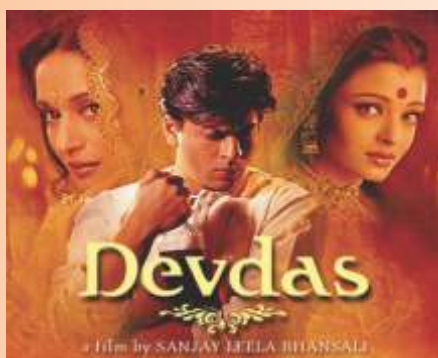
to Sri Lanka.

During the post production, Shoojit would call us after every sequence that was edited to show us the feel of film. Then he would discuss what sort of Music and effects he wanted. I would sit with him and make my notes... What were the types of guns that were used, what kind of helicopters and aircrafts were used by the IPKF, radios, communications, types of computers and tape recorders, telephones etc...slowly piece by piece the entire soundscape started unfolding.

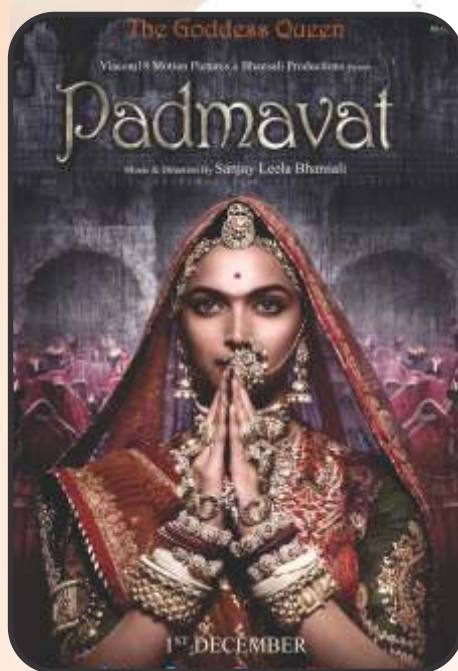
It was a bold subject to approach keeping in mind the kind of mainstream films Bollywood turns out every year, but it had to be treated realistically. It was a story that was told through the eyes of an intelligence officer, his angst, his traumas, his emotions and eventually his guilt of not being able to prevent the assassination of a political leader. Though the character was fictitious, the situations were very real. The treatment had to be very delicately balanced. It wasn't a war film, it had a very strong

political backdrop, one couldn't take sides and it had grim and dark overtones. We had to be very careful not to go overboard and make it sound like a war movie!

Almost co incidentally Dolby came out with a new theater format called the "Dolby Atmos" during our Audio post production, and naturally, as a technician who has always wanted to stay ahead of time with the latest technology, I wanted to have it for *Madras Café*. Most of us are aware of Surround Sound. We now commonly have 5.1 and 7.1 formats in surround, in public theaters but here was something which was even beyond these. It was actually "128.1"!! While 5.1 and 7.1 had the conventional LCR in the front and various divisions of surround speakers along the sides and behind the viewers, Atmos took it a step further by adding two arrays of speakers on top, added more speakers to make the surrounds sound like they were an extension of the LCR and reinforced the LFE by adding more sub woofers to the



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surrounds with crossovers. This film just HAD to be in Dolby Atmos..

Why you felt so because lot of action were involved chase, firing etc?

Yes. From the candid back offices of the government, straight out into the war zone, then back to the protagonist's personal and protected home and again straight out into the war zone, then again the war coming onto our shores, destroying his own house and family, and eventually the assassination of the very person his department was supposed to protect... The sound had to be very dynamic.... I needed the range but not the volume, so if I had adequate dynamic range and a very proportionate reproduction of sound almost like a 3D effect in audio, there was never a need

to go high on the volume to create a dramatic impact. I could achieve this by the silences of the more mundane scenes opening up really "wide" when it came to the action scenes.... Even a distant chopper flying over us was enough to create tension. When it came to explosions, the impact was created more by the falling debris from above than just the loud bang. Similarly, the travelling and crisscrossing of bullets and missiles were more dramatic than the sound of gun fire and rocket launchers..

Could you elaborate the scope of stylization in terms of sounds in this film.

The film starts with a faint chopper sound at a distance in the quiet mountainside of the Himalayas... The



sound of the chopper amplifies...and suddenly in a flash you are dragged into a war zone where the choppers are flying above you and there are bullets flying and there is an explosion and...you realize it was a horrible dream of a traumatized retired government agent, our protagonist.

There are several such moments in the film. The scene where the assassin, a lady, was being made to wear the now famous belt-bomb. The extremists went through an entire dress rehearsal as to how the assassination would be carried out....in that sequence when she is dressing up and other women are dressing her up, you can hear the sounds or ornaments, bangles. I shut out every other sound and you could just hear the twinkling of the ornaments, the payal, the bangles and I kind of spread it all over so there were little twinkly sounds of all these emerging all around you. It was to highlight a very feminine quality of a woman dressing up as though she is going for a wedding. This was in complete contrast to what was going to follow next... a very ghastly end. When eventually she did pull the trigger, what followed the sound of the explosion was a continuous high frequency note. I tried to simulate what happens to us when there is a sudden loud explosion near our ears. Because it is a very unusually loud explosion which you are not prepared for, your ears start "ringing", so I tried to recreate that effect. As he is lying on the floor, thrown off by the blast I blurred out all the sounds and just kept a heartbeat, as though from his point of view everything comes to a standstill.... Everything is in slow motion and there is smoke, there is grime and there is this high frequency note which creates a sense of shock, till faintly you hear a child crying, women crying, ambulance sirens and the sounds of chaos bringing him back again to reality

Tell us something about Background music Required for Madras café.

Shantanu Moitra composed a beautiful theme for this film. He used an electric solo violin which laced all the moods together...whether it was the violence, the loneliness, or the tragedy or the overall somber mood of the film. But the music was minimalistic and very much like an undercurrent. Most importantly, he worked around the sound design.

Can you talk about the foley part for this film?

In this particular film I was very concerned about the foley because that is what really brings out the texture in sound. I needed grit.... I wanted a lot of metal, leather, dirt and grime. I wanted to smell the gun powder, the machines of war, the dust, the wet forest... and I think good foley almost lets you do that.

Which are the other films in Hindi language are been done in this Atmos?

Madras Café is the first Bollywood film that has been fully done in Native Atmos. Now most big banner films are wanting to mix in this format.

What about the theaters playing this sound system?

Well, there are only two theaters currently in Mumbai that have Atmos. Chennai has a chain of 5 or 6 theaters that have the same. Probably by the time you publish this there may be a few more all over.

How Do you see the future of Atmos sound system in India ?

I see a good future of Atmos in India. Its just a matter of time, but we'll get there.

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